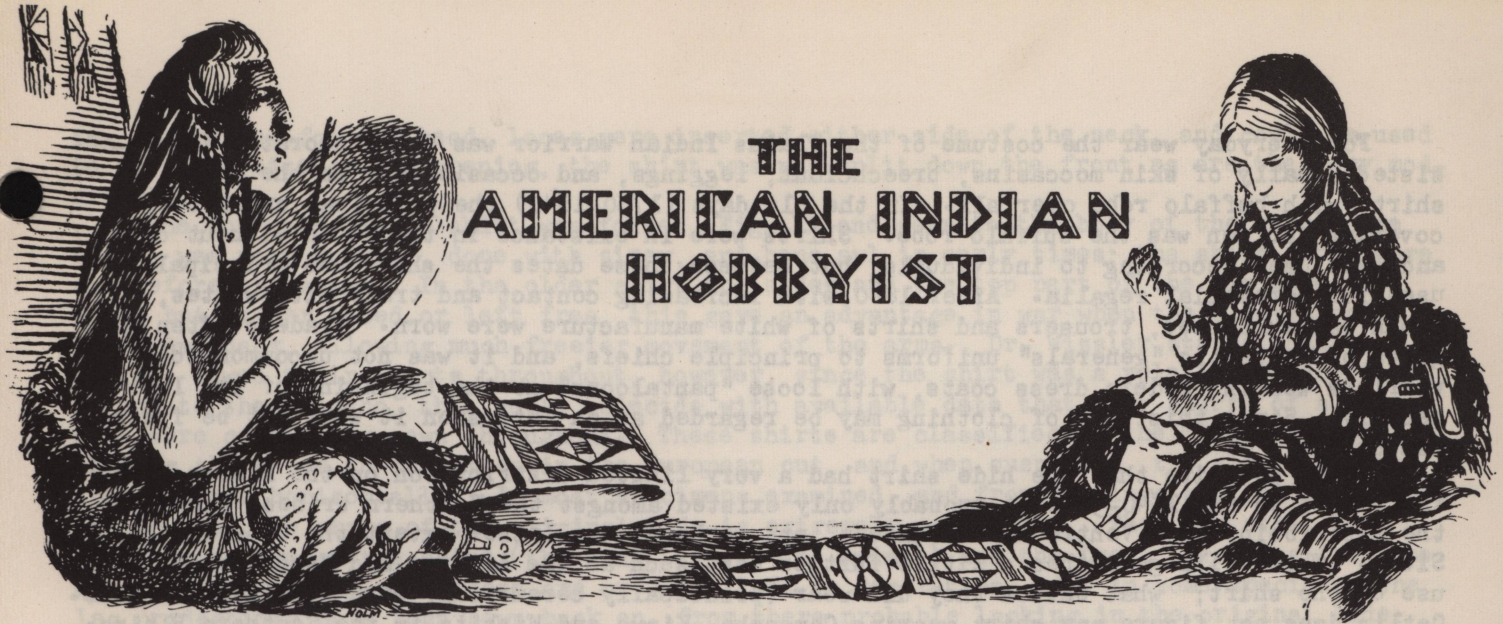


THE AMERICAN INDIAN HOBBYIST



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THE PLAINS INDIANS SHIRT

BY

COLIN TAYLOR



For everyday wear the costume of the Plains Indian warrior was not elaborate, it consisted usually of skin moccasins, breechclout, leggings, and occasionally in the North a shirt, with buffalo robe over all. In the old days (1750-1840) the principal upper body covering for men was the buffalo robe. Shirts were in existence in the North without doubt and were used according to individuals, but between these dates the shirt was principally used for ceremonial regalia. After 1840 with increasing contact and trade with whites, cloth was much used, trousers and shirts of white manufacture were worn. Traders often made gifts of fantastic "generals" uniforms to principle chiefs, and it was not uncommon to see warriors wearing modern dress coats, with loose "pantaloons" at the beginning of the last century. Since this type of clothing may be regarded as an intrusion it will not be further discussed.

It is positive that the hide shirt had a very limited distribution on the Plains. In the 1750's to the 1840-50's it probably only existed amongst the Northern tribes, such as the Assiniboin, Gros Ventre and Blackfeet, and perhaps to a lesser extent the Crow and the Sioux. Those village tribes a little further East such as the Arikira and Mandan made little use of the shirt; what shirts they did wear (principally ceremonial) were obtained in trade. Catlin does not figure any shirt wearing Comanche, Kiowa and Wichita in the Southern Plains; Wallace and Hoebels informants interviewed in the early 1940's say however, it was worn in pre-reservation days, since it is most unlikely that the oldest of these informants could date his earliest personal recollections before the 1860's, it leaves much room for doubt. Again Catlin was amongst the Plains Indians in the summer, and was ill a good bit of the time had he visited them in winter he might have left different pictures. The climate however, cannot be looked upon as a definite deciding factor; many writers remark on the extraordinary disregard the Indians had for the cold in the severe climates of the North. On the Southern Plains, winters were often below freezing point, but it is safe to say that these Southern Indians had as much immunity as their Northern counterparts. There is a complete lack of early Southern Plains shirts in any of the world's collections. Many of the world's eminent experts on Indians are in favour with the writer to the conclusion that no shirts existed except of course in one or two chance occasions, amongst the Southern Plains Indians prior to 1850 which were of native manufacture; after this date, however, with continued contact with the whites, and a probable wider diffusion of culture from the Northern Plains the shirt appears quite frequently amongst them. The Plateau tribes were influenced accordingly; for instance, Lewis and Clark (1804) found the Shoshone well dressed in typical Northern Plains fashion - wearing shirts of deerhide, antelope, bighorn, or more rarely elk-skin; this is true of the Okanagon, Flathead, Nez Perce and all the Plateau tribes.

The origin of the shirt seems lost. It is highly probable that the Eskimo, and the Canadian Dene tribes below them, were the original inventors, although their garments were extremely well developed, that is they were cut to conform to the body, the arms and bottoms of these shirts were tailored, this is not so of the Indians further south who may have been influenced by them, as will be later discussed. It is not unlikely that the Plains shirt was invented independantly by them as the basic structure is extremely simple.

Deerskin was the hide considered most suitable for shirts; bison was inclined to be too coarse, and elk-skin to thick; those tribes near the Rockies sometimes used the Bighorn (i.e. Blackfeet and Crow), this was especially true for ceremonial regalia. Curtis states that clothes were always made from old tipi covers of buffalo hide, the smoke and wear, tanning and thinning, made the hide suitable for use. Curtis is somewhat inclined to be too specific in his statements, it is certain tipi covers were but a very minor source of material.

The procedure for making a shirt was as follows: - (the basic method has been the same since at least 1800, and continued in many cases untill as late as the 1900's). Two skins were used, each hide was cut about $3/4$ up from the bottom, the top half went into making the arms, and the lower half for the body. The lower half, Fig. 1C was sewn along the top leav-

ing an opening for the head, laces were inserted either side of the neck, and could be used to vary the size of the opening, the shirt was not split down the front as are the very modern shirts.

The top half of the shirt was folded, Fig. 1B and sewn to the body of the shirt, the sewing was very durable, done with sinew, and bone awl in early times; the shirt often wore out before the seams. In the older shirt the sides and the top part of the arm were not sewn, but either laced or left free, this gave an advantage in war when the sleeves could be thrown back, allowing much freer movement of the arms. Dr. Wissler states that the Arapaho sewed their shirts throughout, however, since the shirt was a relatively recent addition to the Arapaho, this would coincide with available data that many shirts of a later date were completely sewn throughout. These shirts are classified as the "Poncho" type, that is there was no collar as in the European cut, and when suspended, the sleeve and the shoulder ran horizontally. In most specimens examined, and from drawings and photos up into the 1900's, the shape of the original hide is extremely noticeable. The legs still hang from the bottom of the shirt (the hind legs of the animal) and the front legs hang from the arms about half way up; these are probably left as decorations, for in some specimens the leg projections have been sewn back on, from there probable lacking in the original hide; the tail too, is often noticeable. Many modern counterparts are cut with no respect to the hide whatsoever, the legs are cut off and in most instances the shirt is straight cut across the bottom, and usually fringed.

The everyday shirt was about three feet long, reaching about midway down the average man's thigh, although at times, especially in the early 1800's many of them were extremely long; this is most typical of the Western North Plains, probably on account of their using Bighorn skins. A few were short reaching to the hips or a little below. There seems to have been little change in the length, especially where the old pattern of cutting is used, since the size of the animal would be the deciding factor. Some men's hunting shirts often had short sleeves for ease in butchering, the only decoration was fringing. Although later calico shirts were worn, the buckskin ones had the advantage of greater durability - one shirt lasting about a year - 100 years ago a calico shirt was reckoned at one buffalo robe, or about \$3 which is a considerable price for that time. Such was the daily wear.

On ceremonial occasions they wore more elaborate clothing, which was decorated in a variety of ways; the shirts were usually of native make and were valued more highly than anything of European manufacture. The conception of the average person when visualizing a Plains Indian thinks of beaded or quilled decoration, but it should be pointed out that such costume cannot be considered as typical daily wear any more than the men's tuxedo or woman's evening gown could be called most typical of today's clothing.

The Crows were considered the finest clad Indians in the old days. Their women did some of the finest embroidery, the men made the finest bonnets, and they were one of the richest of all the Plains tribes. Next come probably the Blackfeet, Sioux, Assiniboin, Shoshone Nez Perce Cree, Gros Ventre and others less prosperous. The basic structure for the ceremonial shirt was the same as for everyday wear. At the neck opening back and front, is usually hung a triangular shaped piece of hide. In the old days it was not decorated except with fringing, although in the last two or three decades of the 19th century, bead or quilled work was often applied, the average measured approximately 7" long by 6" wide at the top. Wissler suggests that this was originally a knife sheath. Another opinion held by the writer is that the flap was suggested from the head piece, see Fig. 1A, which was left over when cutting the original hide.

Some of these flaps are rectangular and are perhaps more characteristic of the Blackfeet and Assiniboin; they measure approximately 11" by 3" and on many shirt specimens collected in the 1880 period they are made of red trade cloth. A typical feature when the rectangular flap is used is a large disk in quillwork, or later in beadwork worked on the chest and back. This decoration was considered most characteristic of the Assiniboin and was said by other tribes to have originated amongst them. It is by no means exclusive to them, however, appearing often in Blackfeet, Crow, Sioux, Nez Perce and Shoshone work. Usually where the disk is used the triangular flap is lacking.

A typical feature of the Nez Perce and Blackfeet shirt is the piercing with innumerable small holes, which are never more than a third of an inch in diameter, but cover the entire shirt. Other Plateau tribes used this feature also.

The Sioux often painted their shirts two colours the top in blue and the lower half in yellow. (Occasionally green was used) This was also true of the Crow and some Plateau tribes. It was not unusual for Sioux and some Plateau shirts to bear painted designs, representing dreams or visions; some were connected with the guardian spirit and others, with incidents of the chase and of war. It is not common for Blackfeet to paint live figures on their shirts, but many blackfeet shirts exhibit parallel painted lines, either across the body of the shirt or down the arms and they are usually painted in black or dark blue, although green and red are not uncommon. There is no fixed interpretation to the lines; many fanciful interpretations by imaginative writers are completely unsubstantiated. It is said by some Blackfeet informants, however, that a man who had killed an enemy could call upon another who had previously performed that act, to paint these stripes on leggings and shirt if he wished to do so. The number of stripes was according to his taste and bore no relation to the number of enemy killed. A typical Blackfeet feature of the late 19th century is the painting of tadpole like figures on shirts and leggings although they too, may have had some meaning, they were probably only looked upon as decorative by most wearers. (These are sometimes said to represent bullets)

The most characteristic tribal feature of any shirts are the shoulder and arm stripes. These are suspender like pieces running over the shoulders and down the front and back, and another strip down the arms; they are undoubtedly derived from the epaulets of the American Army. From the pictures by Bodmer and Catlin and in a few early specimens it appears that the arm stripes have long been in use, reaching from the shoulder to the wrist, and on the average $1\frac{1}{2}$ - 2" wide. The shirt stripes were rather poorly developed in the 1830's, but well developed by the 1865's. All these early shirts bearing the shoulder stripes have them running over the shoulder seam, covering the joint. At a later date these stripes slant further inwards, the seam being covered by a fringe. The shoulder stripes around and after the 1860's measure on the average 21" long by 3" wide, 14" of this show down the front of the shirt, and the other 7" at the back (shirts of a more modern era, i.e. after 1870, show a definite front and back, earlier ones have little or no difference between them). Present modern day shirts have beaded bands anything up to 40" long by 4" wide. The type of bead and pattern used on the stripes is also a good indication of both age and tribe. Prior to 1840, quillwork predominated, so called pony beads were also used, these measured about $1/8$ " in diameter, the principle colours used were blue, white and black. Any shirt showing pony beads is probably at least eighty years old, for except amongst the Blackfeet this type gave way to the smaller type of seed bead about 1850, these beads being $1/16$ to $3/32$ " in diameter and in the older specimens varying considerable in thickness. That is the distance across the bead at right angles to the central opening is quite uniform in any given size, but the diameter parallel with the hole varies considerably. Often one edge is thicker than the other. In recent times this irregularity hardly exists, probably because of improved methods of manufacture. The presence or absence of this unevenness is a clue to the age of the specimen. The older beads of this type are opaque, and have softer, richer colours than are seen today. Translucent beads do not seem to appear before sixty or 70 years ago. Metal or glass beads, coloured silver or gilt, and faceted throughout, were introduced after 1885. Before 1860 on the plains at least it seems, that no patterns existed which could be considered typical of any one tribe, after this period most of the major Plains tribes developed a style which was frequently almost exclusive to them.

Two methods of application of the beads to the hide were used. One, the so called "Lazy squaw stitch" may be considered most typical of the Sioux, Arapaho, Cheyenne, although the Crow, Assiniboin, Ute, Gros Ventres, Shoshone partly used it. The Overlay stitch is used entirely by the Blackfeet, Sarsi, Plains Cree, and Flathead, and in part by the Crow, Shoshone, Assiniboin and Gros Ventre. Tribes on the Southern Plains only occasionally did beadwork, which consisted of narrow bands for trimming edges etc., the lazy stitch was then used.

Bead weaving is uncommon to the Plains Indians. Three principle design styles existed in Plains beadwork patterns; they were, Blackfeet (Northern Plains), Sioux (Central Plains), and Crow. The photographs accompanying this paprer help illustrate these design styles, but the full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The bibliography is too long to list fully here. I would like to thank sincerely the following people for their kind and very helpful interest:

John C. Ewers, Associate Curator of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institute, who helped and advised on many points; Alice Marriott, Oraibi, Arizona; Herbert Krieger, Dept. of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institute; Geoffrey Turner at the University Museum, Oxford; and the late Frederick Douglas of the Denver Art Museum.

I have used some of the material of Clark Wissler from the publications of the American Museum of Natural History; and much work has been done in studying journals and narratives of early American explorations.

Last, but certainly by no means least, thanks to Cottie Burland and Adrian Digby in the British Museum for their kind co-operation. The photos are from the British Museum collections.

Correspondance is welcomed on this subject either by tape or letter: -

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Brighton, Sussex
England

CONTEST

Well our contest is finally over. I'm really sorry that several people did not notice that the deadline date was moved forward and so missed out. Many fine articles were submitted and a few were frankly of no use at all. Its a fact that I received more entries on the last day of the contest than during the two previous months. Guess everyone waited until the last minute.

Judging was quite a problem because so many entries were of about the same caliber. The editor called in two friends; Clyde Felts, who does quite a bit of the illustrating for the magazine, and Wes Remhild, President of the NAIDA, between the three of us we finally arrived at a first and second place winner.

First prize of a beautiful Catlinite pipe with quilled stem, went to Colin Taylor for his fine article on the Plains Indians Shirt. Second prize, of a pair of matched ribbon Applique strips, went to Glenn H. White Jr. of Junction City, Kansas for a fine article on the Costume of the Oklahoma Straight Dancer. This will be used as a basis for a future issue of the Hobbyist.

Other entries deserving of special mention are: The article on "High Boots" (included in this issue) by Mrs. Taranoff; an article on a Double Trailer Bonnet by Albert D. Burdett of New Birmingham, England; an article by Jack R. Williams on Bob Backus the Bonnet Maker; Mrs. Clarence Hauwiller's article on the Horse Gear of the Plains Indian with many fine illustrations; an article on the "Namanu" dancers of Portland, Oregon by Roberta DelSol; a fine article on Omaha Turbans by Darwin DeCamp; and an article by Dakotah Fred on the Wiyaka Oshota group. There were many, many more. We especially like the stories on the various dance groups and will use all that included a group photo along with the story. A group story with a photo of only one representative of that group is not of much value.

My sincere thanks to everyone who took the time to prepare an entry. I wish I could give a pipe to everyone. Now that the contest is over, please don't feel that it is too late to submit your ideas. Articles, suggestions etc. are always welcome.

PATTERN FOR MANS SHIRT 18" & 13" CENT
TWO DEERSKINS REQUIRED

FIG 2 ILLUSTRATES FINISHED SHIRT
THE BANDS ON THE SHOULDERS AND
ARMS SHOWS APPROXIMATE POSITIONS
OF QUILLED OR BEADED BANDS

DOTTED LINE DENOTES FOLD
CONTINUOUS LINES DENOTES CUT

- (A) NECK YOKE
- (B) ARMS
- (C) BODY

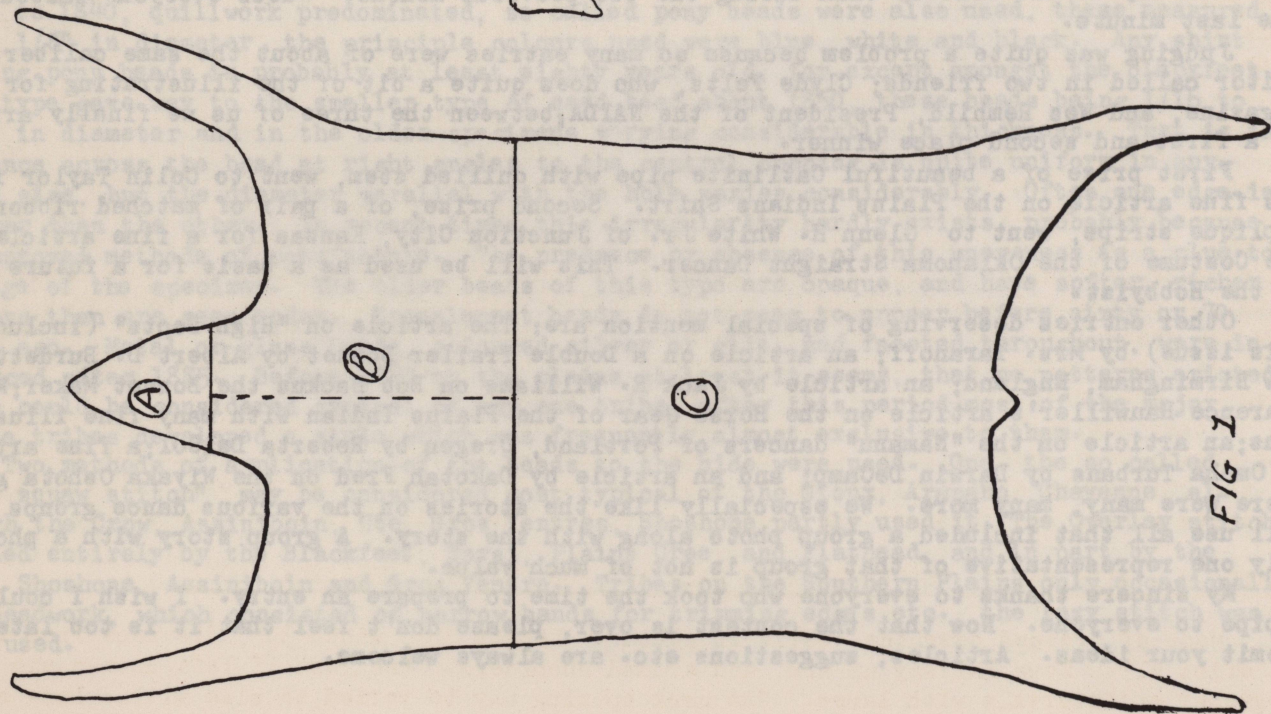


FIG 1

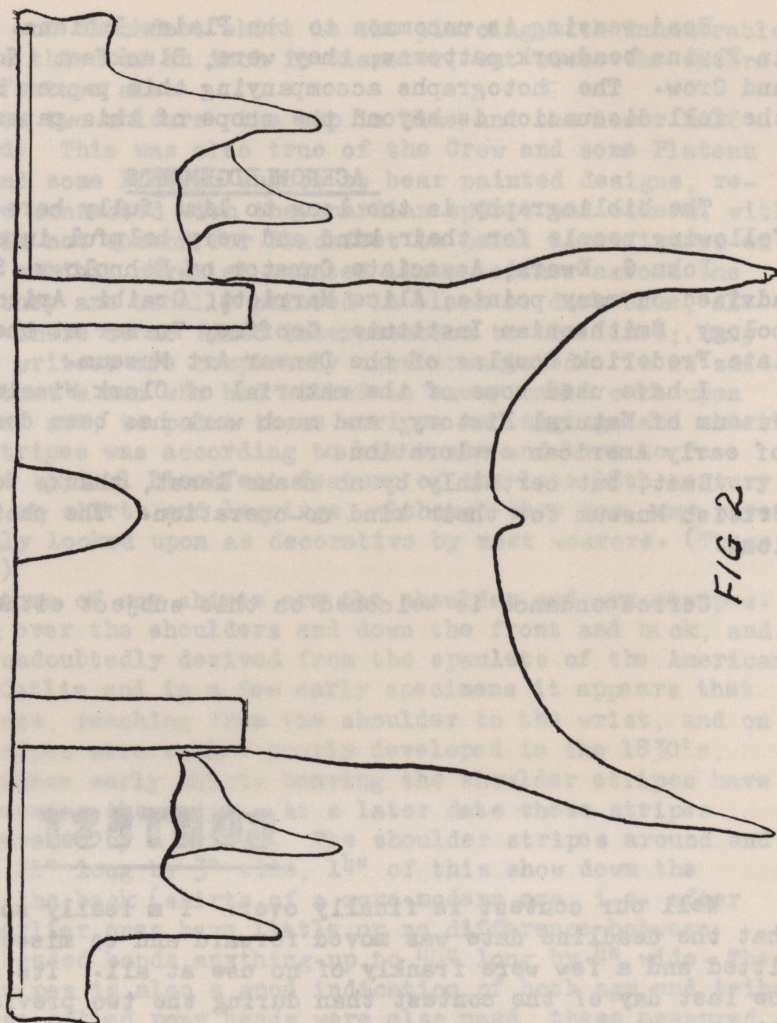
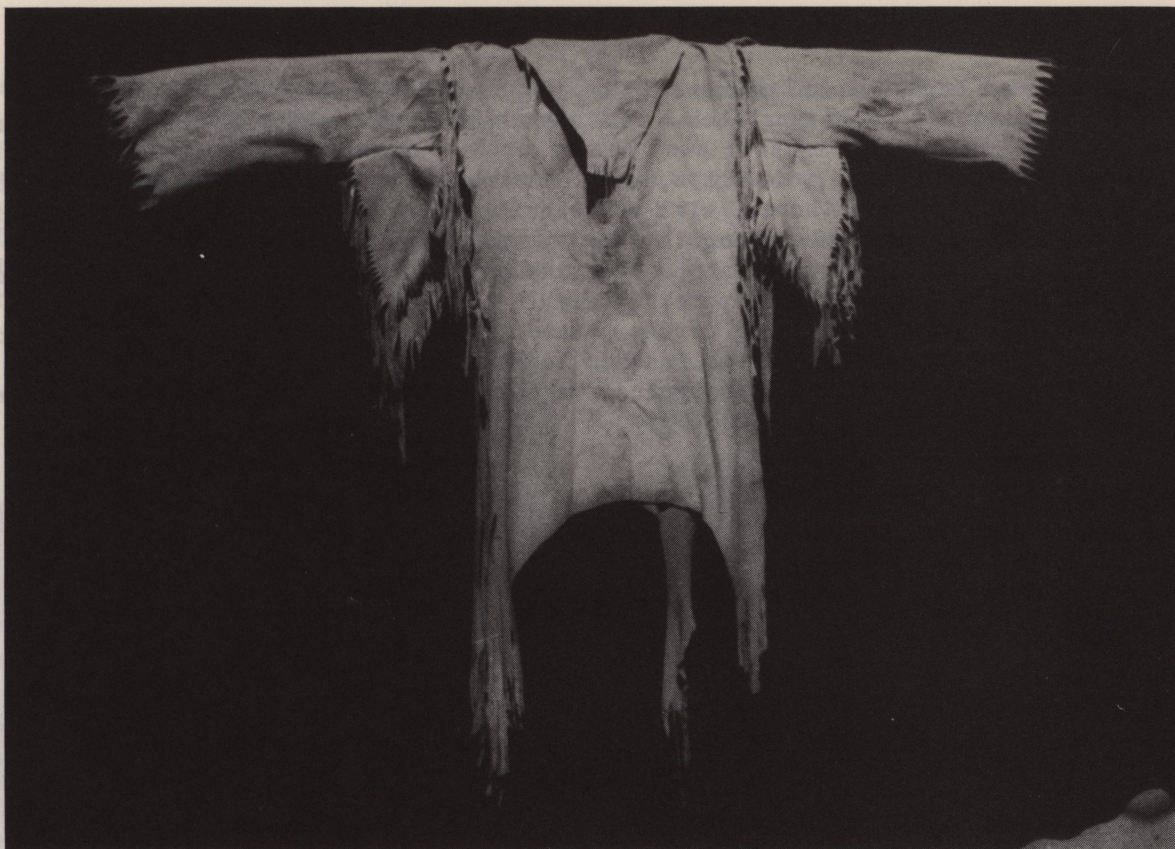


FIG 2



This plate depicts a typical Plains Indian shirt stripped of all decoration save fringing. Note the strong suggestion of the shape which characterizes shirts made from two deerskins as in Fig. 1 and 2. The shape predominated for a good hundred years on the Plains and the making of shirts such as these shows great economy of labor and materials. Women's dress were also made of two deerskins and again advantage was taken of the natural contour of the hide. It must not be thought that this peculiarity is characteristic of the Plains Indians alone. It seems in most instances the native tailor in many parts of the world made the most of what materials he had at hand, and used it to its fullest, with minimum wastage.

For example the shirt or poncho worn by the Indians of South America; although they are woven cloth the finished product is like rectangular bags with a hole for the head and one for each arm. These people it appears like many others did not cut their cloth but wove the garment entire. Now, weaving in the primitive sense, and even in modern times; must proceed in rectangular units; hence, a woven garment is bound to be rectangular and once again we find the contour of a shirt largely the inevitable result of the choice of materials. We may now generalize and say that the style of shirt amongst the Plains and other regions, as well as other garments of native manufacture, were not so much as creations of the imagination but grew naturally out of the form of the material used.

"Other Regions" would include the South American Indians, and ancient Greeks and Romans. The eskimo were good tailors, they cut their material to fit the body. With the exception of the Chinese who also tailored their clothing, as far as native work goes, fully tailored garments appear only amongst the peoples occupying the Arctic regions of the world.

PLATE 2 - HIDE SHIRT, DECORATED WITH HAIR AND FUR FRINGE, PROBABLY SIOUX

Made of dressed deerhide, white in colour. Length 36", width 30", distance from wrist to wrist 61". Sewn halfway up arm, and around shoulders. The rest if left unsewn and caught together at intervals with laces. The neck opening may be varied to size with a lace either side of that opening. The edge of the shirt is slightly serrated. The shirt is decorated

with two broad beaded bands, which measure 3" by 18" over the shoulders, and 2½" by 18" on the arms. The beadwork is in Lazy stitch. White background and pattern in blue, red and yellow.

From the inner edge of the arm strips, hang alternate fringes of white ermine and black hair. These are bound where attached, with white quillwork. A number of small red fluffy feathers are attached at intervals along the arm strips. Bands of black parallel lines are painted on the arms. The top part of the body is decorated front and back with scores of large brass beads, they are attached approximately 2" apart horizontally, and 1½" apart vertically; each in the center of a green circle painted on the hide. On the chest is attached a metal disc (gold?), which on close examination looks like the back of a pocket watch.

This type of shirt may be taken as typical regalia of the central Plains Indians, such as the Sioux or Crow of the 1870 - 1900 period.



PLATE "2

The shirt in plate 3 is probably Blackfoot, collected 1874 or earlier. It is made of dressed deerhide, brown in colour. Decorated with black scalp locks. Length 42". Width from end of sleeve to opposite side 76", width halfway up shirt 17". The shoulders and the ends of the arms only are sewed, the rest - the flaps hanging from arms and side of shirt - are loose. It is not exactly true to say that the arms are actually sewn, they are more finely laced at close intervals. At the neck is a yoke 8" long 7" wide at the top, and 2½" at the bottom. This is painted red, and is decorated with 8 hair fringes, each bound at the bottom with white quills. The yoke is cut from the actual body of the hide itself, and has not been sewn or laced on afterwards. The sides of the shirt are cut into a fringe about 1". The decoration consists of quilled strips over the shoulders, and beadwork down the arms. The quillwork is 15" X 2", the design consists of two triangles balanced at their apex as the

central pattern, with a line pattern about 5" above and below it. The background is in white quill; pattern is red. The quill technique is the one quill, diagonal, two thread sewing. The beadwork on the arms is done in two rows of blue pony beads, each $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide, the beadwork is sewn directly to the shirt (unlike the quilled pieces which are made separately, then sewn on).

This shirt is evidently considered older than the others in this collection, the basic structure is however similar. In considering the quill work and the colour of the shirt, evidence points to blackfoot origin.



PLATE 3

Plate 4 - Shirt decorated with heavy hide fringing, probably Blackfoot about 1880-1900. Made of dressed deerhide generally brown in colour but blotched in places with red paint. The length is 33" and the width from wrist to wrist is 63". The shape of the hides are clearly discernable. The shirt has the sleeves cut from the skin of the body in the usual way. From the arms hang flaps, these are about 19" long. The edge of the shirt is not sewn but held with thongs at irregular intervals. The tail is discernable, and the bottom of the shirt is slightly serrated.

The decoration consists of beaded bands over the shoulders and down the arms. The shoulder bands are $13\frac{1}{2}$ " long front and back. The design is of diamonds, worked in yellow, outlined in blue; the background is light blue. Similar decoration is on the arm strips; with dark blue diamonds outlined in red. The bead technique is applique work.

From the inside edge of the arm bands, is thick fringing about 13" long, each fringe is wrapped at the point of attachment with quillwork in yellow and pink. From the outside edge of the shoulder bands hang similar fringes; these, however, are caught together with pink beads where the quillwork binds. On the chest front and back is a circular beadworked disc 8" in diameter. The pattern is dark blue on light background, with a small disc of red cloth

in the center. At the neck front and back is a yoke of rectangular red flannel $2\frac{1}{2}$ " X $11\frac{1}{2}$ " in size.

This shirt may be considered typical of the Northern Plains Indian's ceremonial regalia of the late 1800's. The beadwork design and the method of applying the beads is characteristic of the blackfeet and their immediate neighbors. The red paint is common among most Plains tribes for use on ceremonial objects.



PLATE 4

Cover illustration - Shirt of blue trade cloth. Cree Indians. Length 28", width from wrist to wrist 66". Cotton sewn throughout. The sleeves are sewn their full length, but the edges of the shirt are left unsewn, with two tie strings either side. The bottom edge of the shirt and arms are scalloped and bound at the edges with yellow binding. The neck hole is not adjustable and it is bound at the edge with brown otter fur. The shirt is decorated with beaded strips 18" long on the shoulders and about 3" wide. The bead technique is applique, but instead of the lines running horizontally they run at an angle of about 30 degrees to the horizontal.

This shirt is a good example of the influence of white contact. The characteristic shape of the deerhide is totally lacking and the only resemblance to the native pattern is an effort at making small flaps along the lower edge of the arm. The general cut shows very definite white influence. Wissler found that this type of shirt pattern was predominant amongst the Iroquois through Canada to the Salish of British Columbia.

Further decoration consists of a circular disk on the front and back of the shirt worked in beads. Around the edges of all the beadwork are strips of otter fur, and the front of the shirt is decorated with a profusion of mauve and pink horsehair. These could be symbols of horses captured in war, but it is more probable that they are purely decorative.

Plate 5 - Blackfeet Indian Chief's shirt. Made of dressed deerskin, white in colour. Length 36". Width from end of sleeve to opposite side 76". Sinew sewn, whipped stitch. The sleeve is only sewn half way up from the cuff, the rest of the sleeve and the sides of the shirt are left free. The flaps which hang from the sleeves have been sewn on, and are not the original leg pieces. The legs hang from both sides of the shirt. The edges of the shirt have been serrated as can be noted in the photo. The decoration consists of strips of quillwork, which measure 2" X 25" on the sleeves and 2" X 11" on the shirt. The pattern is made up of squares and circles on the sleeves and squares only on the shirt. The quills are red, purple and white in colour, six parallel bands of quillwork make the width of the band. At the neck hang a rectangular strip of red cloth. The chest and back of the shirt are decorated with a solidly worked square of quillwork 10" X 9½", the pattern is red on the inside, blue boarder and white background. Quill technique is one quill, parallel two thread sewing. The fact that this shirt is quilled and not beaded is no indication of age.

Around the outside edges of the quilled chest decoration are painted discs, outlined with black and orange centers. A painted band runs across from one edge of the shirt to the other, this again has a black outline with orange center. Two birds (thunderbirds?) are painted either side of a buffalo head, these are rather unusual features, although the buffalo head reminds J. C. Ewers of figures painted on a Blood Indian lodge seen in the early 1940's.

Half an inch apart all along the outer edges of the quill strips are attached strips of white fur. These are quill wrapped for about 1½" up, with red and green fluffs bound for an additional decoration.

This shirt was probably made around the 1880-1900 period. It may be taken as quite typical of ceremonial regalia of the Northern Plains Indians, 1870 onwards.



Plate 6 - Shirt of white buckskin, Plains Indian. Length 29", width half way up shirt 35". Width from wrist to wrist 66". Decoration consists of quilled strips over the shoulders and down the arms; and heavy fringing from the edges of these bands. The quill technique is No. 6 in Wissler's classification (see "Material Culture of the Blackfoot Indians" A.M.N.H.) i.e. a type of multiple quill diagonal two thread sewing. The pattern - not clear in the photograph - is a series of stepped diamonds worked in white and orange quills, similar pattern appears on the arms, but the colour used here are brown, orange and white, the background is in yellow quillwork. The shoulder bands are 21" long by 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide - 14" of which show at the front. The arm bands are 16" long by 1" wide. The quilled strips are edged with $\frac{1}{2}$ " bands of white pony beads. Running alongside the quilled strips in a horizontal plane are black painted bands, the hide beneath these bands is painted yellow. The edges of the shirt are not sewn, but have tie laces at intervals. Likewise with the arms which are sewn only at the ends for a distance of about six inches. From the neck hangs a yoke which measures 7" long, this is of red trade cloth, bordered with green, which has white pony beadwork on it. Either side of the neck opening are laces for adjusting the neck opening.

Shirts of this type date from 1870 onwards. Tribal identification is difficult since some features are characteristic of the Sioux and Central Plains, and others of the Blackfeet and their neighbors, but the shirt is probably Northern in origin.



PLATE 6

HU-TON-WIN

We would like to introduce a newly formed Indian Dancing Society for girls in Detroit. The name of the group is "The Hu-Ton-Win Indian Dancing Society" which in Omaha means, "Voice of the Thunder". It is affiliated with the Wa-Kin-Yan Indian Dancing Society for boys. (Wa-Kin-Yan in Lakota means "Thunder")

Our aim is to bring to girls from 14 years of age and up an Indian program compared to the boys societies. Beading, chanting, dancing, Indian lore, camping, social activities, etc.

The girls costumes are patterned after the Plains Indians. Every girl is required to make and bead her own costume, head-band, belt, and any other item of Indian nature she may wish to add.

Up to this time our dances, done in conjunction with the Wa-Kin-Yans, are the; Belt Dance, Round Dance, Serpentine, Corn Dance of the Hopi, Rabbit Dance, Skip Dance of the Navajo, Sioux squaw and the Dying Maiden. We also have a girl in our group who does the hoop dance with a boy in the Wa-Kin-Yans. We plan to do considerable research on future dances in which the women of the various tribes participated.

As of now our chanting consists of the Cheyenne Fast War, Peyote Owl Song, and the Omaha Tribal Prayer and the Zuni Sunrise Song. We have acquired some new songs that we hope to learn.

Our membership is eight. The leadership of the girls is under the direction of Doris Platt and Elsie Rather. The Wa-Kin-Yans are directed by Robert Platt, Society Advisor; Joseph Englehardt, Society Chief and Ronald Rossman, Assistant Chief.

We would appreciate any information anyone has on dancing, songs etc. that the women of the tribes did. So drop us a line to; Doris Platt; 22517 Lake Drive; St. Clair Shores, Michigan



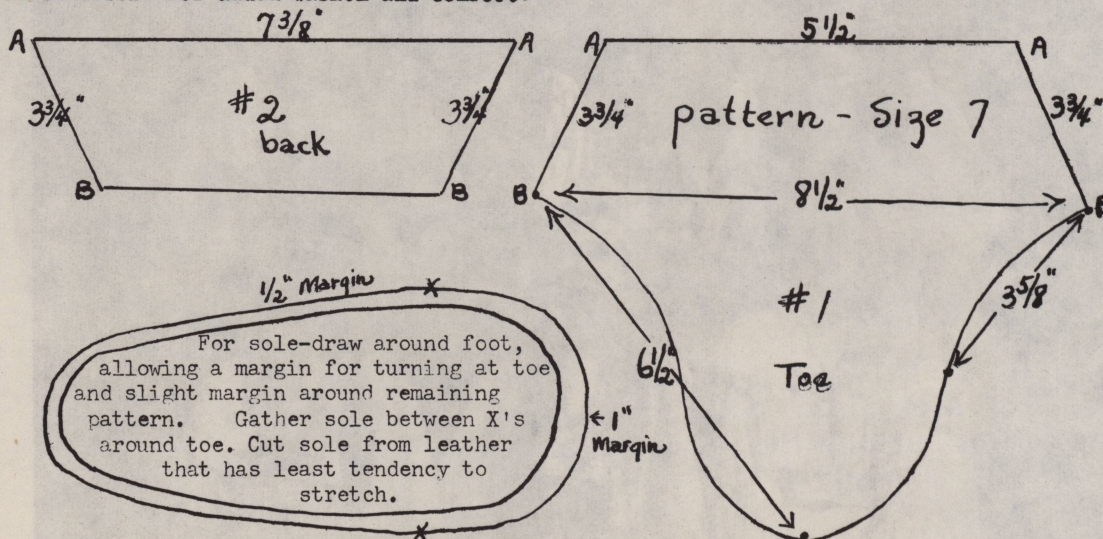
High Boots

patterned after
those made by
the Indians of
Interior Alaska



Marilyn Taranoff

These boots are used in mid-winter when the snow is dry, and are fine for using as after-skiing boots. They are similiar to the Eskimo Muk-luk only the sole is made of smoke tanned moosehide instead of the crimped rawhide sealskin. The ones pictured have a black and white hair calf top boarder, a strip of beaver fur under the boarder and the main part is also of black and white calf. Hair seal makes very attractive boots also, and is used extensively. However, the boarder is always made of black and white calf sewn together in a manner such as quilting, only more difficult as one must remember to have the hair always pointing down, and to sew pieces together in such a manner as to hide the stitches so they will not show from the right side. This is a simple boarder pattern. They can be made more difficult using other geometric patterns or animal silouettes. This type boarder is used on parkas also. One may see boarders made by sewing one color over the other as applique, but the best are made by cutting out and sewing together as with this boarder. One can use a piece of sheepskin as an innersole for added warmth and comfort.



Dental floss is a good substitute for sinew as used by the Indians. Small size glover's needles make skin sewing easier.

Sew #1 and #2 together at A and B. Sew together on wrong side, keeping in mind that the stitches should not show on the right side. Two thongs long enuf to cross behind ankle and tie in front, must be sewn to each side of boot, on right side, at B on pattern. Now cut a piece of soft leather (the same as used on sole) about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide and long enuf to go around the bottom of boot where upper will be sewn to sole. Sew this to the calfskin upper. The sole is first gathered at points as shown. In order to protect the stitches when sewing the sole to the upper it is necessary to sew a strip of soft leather into the seam. A strip of colored leather is sometimes used to add more color to the boots. The boot must be turned wrong side out when sewing on the sole. Next turn right side out, and then sew on strip of beaver fur about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide and long enuf to reach around top of boot. (Rabbit fur can be substituted) Next sew on finished boarder and top off with piece of folded material. Leave a hole at the back of the material to allow for drawstrings that keep boots tight at the top.

SOME WINTER SPORTS OF BLACKFOOT
INDIAN CHILDREN

By JOHN C. Ewers



Shirt-Tunic with Bear Design. Chilkat, Alaska
(Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation)

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



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SOME WINTER SPORTS OF BLACKFOOT INDIAN CHILDREN

By JOHN C. EWERS

WINTER in the country of the Blackfoot Indians of Montana and Alberta is a long and treacherous season. Violent winds sweep the high plains at the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains. Blizzards are common. Even when the snow falls during a period of calm, rising winds soon pick it up and whirl it crazily into deep, crusted drifts. The temperature too is fickle. In a few hours it may drop from above freezing to ten, twenty, or thirty degrees below zero, and stay there for weeks on end.

In buffalo days the Blackfoot knew it would have been tempting fate to have pitched their lodges on the open, treeless plains through the winter. It was their custom to make a great buffalo hunt in the fall of the year to provide stores of meat for the winter months when bad weather might make hunting difficult or impossible. As the days grew shorter and colder, and winter approached (in late October or early November), each band group sought a sheltered locality in the deep valley of one of the swift, eastward-flowing rivers of their country, where firewood, drinking water, and wild grass for their horses were plentiful. They cleared out the underbrush in a grove of cottonwoods or willows and set up their conical, skin-covered lodges among the trees beside the stream. There the little village remained until the return of spring in late March or April.

We might think that active Blackfoot children who had been accustomed to the freedom of the open plains throughout the spring, summer, and fall, would have found winter life in the valley confining and dull indeed. However, elderly Indians, still living on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, who spent the winters of their childhood during the 1860s and 1870s in the valley villages, say the life was anything but boring. They recall that winter was the season for a variety of exciting sports which they remember with genuine pleasure. As one elderly full-blood expressed it: "There was little fighting and few arguments among the children. We just had lots of real fun."

To thoroughly enjoy outdoor sports in cold, wintry weather, one must dress warmly. This the Blackfoot children did. Their winter dress was designed for comfort rather than for good looks. It was a far cry from the picturesque feather bonnet and the elaborately beaded and fringed white deerskin suit and dress most white people have in mind when they think of Plains Indians.

Most boys between the ages of 8 and 16 wore a snug winter outfit consisting of a cap, shirt or coat, mittens, breech-cloth, leggings, and moccasins. The cap was a close-fitting one of animal skin turned hair-side out. Buffalo-skin ones were most common, although some boys' caps were of coyote or even white dog skin. Earlaps of the same material, reversed so that the animal hair was next to the ears, were sewn to the cap; these were tied under the chin. Unless the boy's hair was too short, it was braided, and the braids hung down in front of the ties. His shirt or jacket was made from a buffalo-calf skin or the soft, smoked top of a discarded skin lodge-cover; this fell to a little below the waist and was held together at the front by a series of deerskin tie-strings. Some boys wore a knee-length coat of buffalo-skin, hair-side out, fastened with ties as was the shirt. Mittens were of buffalo-skin, hair inside; they were tied together with a skin string passing over the wearer's shoulders. Each boy also wore a breech-cloth, a long narrow piece of trade blanket cloth, that passed between his legs and over a belt of buffalo-rawhide that had been pounded soft with a stone. His leggings were two skin cylinders (either deerskin or pieces from old lodge-covers), each tied to the belt by a deerskin string. They had no fringe or decoration of any kind. The leggings fell to the ankle, where they were snugly held in place by rawhide bands under the moccasin feet. Moccasins were of buffalo-skin with the



FIG. 1—Winter costume of a Blackfoot boy

hair inside. A single piece enclosed the foot. A second piece sewn to this one at the ankle, encased the leg as high as the middle of the calf. This piece was hidden from view by the boy's leggings. Most boys stuffed the feet of their moccasins with grass to provide added warmth in very cold weather.

This was the usual costume (fig. 1). However, a few of the boys, whose fathers were wealthy men, dressed in hooded coats and leggings of blanket cloth obtained from white traders. Only their mittens and moccasins were of native buffalo-skin.

Girls braided their hair and covered their heads with caps like the boys. Their principal garment was a long dress of deerskin or the top of an old lodge. The dress had half-length sleeves and was confined to the waist by a hide belt. Over the dress a cape of buffalo-skin, hair inside, was worn. It fell to about the waist and tied in front at the neck. Girls' mittens were like those of the boys. Their winter moccasins were tied to their leggings, which reached well above the knees. In very cold weather some girls wore "a sort of bloomer" of buffalo-calf skin under their dresses also.

One of the most popular winter sports of Blackfoot children was coasting down the steep, snow-covered slopes that bordered the valley and out onto the valley floor. For coasting boys usually used a sled that was very cleverly made without a single nail or bolt, entirely of native materials (fig. 2). The runners were buffalo rib bones; the long, heavy ribs of a buffalo cow, from which the meat had been cut and scraped away. These ribs were separated from the back-

bone and breastbone and reassembled in exactly the same order they had appeared on the body of the buffalo. From 5 to 10 ribs were employed for a set of runners. The ribs were tied together tightly at each end by a rawhide rope that wound in and around a crosspiece of split willow. The seat was a piece of skin from the leg of a buffalo, stretched



FIG. 2—Blackfoot boy's sled

hair-side up over the runners and tied to the willow cross-bars at each end. A buffalo-tail was sewn or tied to the rear of the seat for decoration. A rawhide rope, tied to the front end, served to pull the sled uphill and to guide it in sliding down.

Some men were known for their skill in making these sleds. Wealthy men are said to have paid one of them a good horse to fashion a sled for one of their sons. A good sled-maker was very careful to use only strong, heavy ribs for runners. Heavy sleds would travel farther and faster, and the runners would be less apt to crack if the sled ran into a rock.

Before using the sled, its owner pulled it around in the snow until the runners were coated with slick ice. In coasting the boy sat on the hide seat, leaned well back, and



FIG. 3—The sled in action

This type of sled was used by boys of many, if not all, neighboring tribes of the Northwestern Plains. Their use among the Mandan, Teton Dakota, Gros Ventres, Crows, and probably the Sarcee has been reported. After the buffalo were exterminated in the Blackfoot country in the early 1880s, boys continued to use sleds of this type, made of horse or steer ribs, for a number of years.

balanced his weight by extending his legs forward and upward at an angle. He held the rawhide rope in his hands and jerked it to one side if he wished the sled to turn. The buffalo-tail ornament trailed behind, flopping and weaving in the breeze (fig. 3).

Sometimes a group of boys decided upon a contest to see which one of them could coast the greatest distance down the slope and into the valley. Boys who were confident of winning, wagered their sleds against those of the other fellows on the outcome. Or sometimes, when the snow was well-packed on the ground, boys lined their sleds up at the top of the slope. Then one at a time they pushed them down the hill. As the last one started on its riderless way, all of the boys ran down the incline after their sleds as fast as they could run. The boy won whose sled had traveled the greatest distance. It was winner take all. He gathered up all the other boys' sleds for his own. It required a heavy sled to win such a contest.

Girls, and boys who owned no sleds, coasted on raw buffalo-hides from which the hair had been removed with a stone. It is said that the older women watched these hides very closely. If a girl returned home from coasting with a hide that had become worn soft, an older woman took it from her. She cut out the center of the hide for moccasin soles. The edge of the hide was made into rawhide rope.

Sometimes a group of boys and girls of about the same age played "hunting the buffalo". First a group of girls started downhill coasting on buffalo-robies. Before they had gone far down the slope, the boys started after them on pieces of rawhide. The girls were the buffalo, the boys the hunters. When all piled up at the bottom of the slope, each boy would poke a girl in the pit of the stomach and shout, "I kill you now!"

There were a number of other children's games played in the snow. Children tried to see who could hop the farthest on one leg in deep snow. Boys wagered their arrows in this contest. In another game, the boys divided into two sides. Boys of one side tossed a small boy of the other side in a buffalo-robe or blanket. They tossed him as high as they could. The object of the game was to make him cry out that he had enough. If they could not make him do that, the other side was declared the winner. A variation of that game was one in which boys of one side held a buffalo-robe, stretched tightly in their hands, on which a small boy of the other side stood. At the same time a boy on the ground took a long breath and repeated the sound "tups, tups, tups." If the boy fell off the shaky buffalo-robe before the other one gave out of breath, the first side lost. If he remained standing after the other boy lost his breath, his side won. Sometimes the boys who held the robe moved it a little bit from side to side to make it more difficult for the lad who was attempting to stand on it.



FIG. 4—Playing the top game

Boys liked to spin tops on snow or ice too. The top most commonly used was of birch-wood, about 2½ inches high and 2 inches in diameter at the upper end, tapering to a point at the base. Each boy marked his top in a certain way to identify it. He daubed it with paint, left bands of birch-bark on the upper portion, or drove a brass tack in the head of it. To spin his top, a boy first set it in motion by hand, with a quick twist of the wrist. Then he kept it spinning by stroking it occasionally with a whip. The whip was a wooden handle more than two feet long with four deerskin lashes, each about a foot long, tied to one end. The tops were spun on hard trampled snow, or more often on a thin covering of snow on the river ice, after the stream was solidly frozen over.

A favorite top game was played on a circular track of packed snow several feet wide and about 20 feet in diameter on the outside. The track was crossed at intervals by little trenches dug in the snow. Two boys then tried to see which one could spin his top the greatest distance around the circle. It required considerable skill to whip a moving top in order to make it jump one of the trenches and keep spinning in the flat area on the other side. The winner took the loser's top as a forfeit (fig. 4).

Another top game was played on smooth ice, using round stones about the size of a man's fist for tops. Two boys started their stones spinning rapidly, then whipped them together as hard as they could. The boy whose top either cracked the other stone or continued spinning the longest after the collision, was the winner. Boys wagered their wooden tops in this game.

When it was snowing boys and girls enjoyed sliding on the river ice. As they slid they repeated over and over a phrase which, translated into English meant, "Man, it's sure true!" They tried to say this phrase as many times as they could before they came to a stop.

When there was snow on the river ice, the girls cleared a long path in a large oval. Sometimes it followed the river around a bend and back. Then the best "skater" started sliding over the ice in his moccasined feet. The others fell in behind. Round and round the oval path they "skated". It was fun to see who could "skate" fastest.

On clear, cold moonlight nights boys and girls gathered on the river. Sometimes the boys sat on their rib-bone sleds and the girls pulled them over the ice. At other times the boys broke off chunks of ice, or used old frying-pans to sit on while they held to the girls' dresses and were pulled about the river on the ice. Then the boys took turns pulling the girls, amid shouts of joy and peals of laughter.

On cold, blustery evenings the children sat around the warm fire inside the lodges and listened to an old man tell the beautiful myths and legends of their tribe, or recite the brave deeds of Blackfoot heroes in their wars with Crows, Flatheads, Cree, or Sioux, or tell of some of the stirring hunting experiences of himself or others of his tribe.

Thus the long winter months passed. When boys reached their middle 'teens they began to join war-parties and to take the part of men in hunting. In their early 'teens most girls married and settled down. Then they were men and women. Coasting, top-spinning, sliding on ice, and other children's games no longer interested them. Yet, while they lasted, those childhood days in the winter camps were happy ones. They were "really fun".

Scalping—The ancient practice of scalping was by no means confined to Indians, as it was known in the Old World as far back as the time of Herodotus. Nor was it common to all Indian tribes, for in North America the custom was restricted to a limited area in eastern United States and the lower St. Lawrence region. It was absent from New England and much of the Atlantic coast, and, until comparatively recent times, the whole interior and the Plains area. Throughout most of America where the practice was in vogue, the earlier trophy was the head itself. The spread of scalping over a great part of central and western United States was a direct result of the encouragement in the form of bounties for Indian scalps offered by the colonial and more recent governments, the scalp being regarded as superior to the head as a trophy by reason of its lighter weight and greater adaptability to display and ornamentation.

Tipi—The term *tipi* (téé pee) is the only word of Sioux, or Dakota, origin that has been incorporated into the English language to designate the portable skin tent of the Plains Indians and which means literally "to-dwell used-for". Indian dwellings vary so greatly in form and are so unlike any habitations to which white people were accustomed, it was only natural that their aboriginal names were taken over (as in the case of many other unfamiliar things), such as *wickiup*, *wigwam* (Algonquian), *hogán* (Navaho), *iglu*, *igloo* (Eskimo), in addition to *kiva*, the ceremonial chamber of the Hopi of Arizona, now universally used in preference to the misleading Spanish *estufa* (stove, hot-house, sudatory), to designate every structure of that kind, ancient or modern.

Black Drink—Known also as Carolina tea and called by the Creek Indians *ássilupútski*, was a decoction prepared by brewing the leaves of *Ilex cassine* and used by the Creeks and other Southern tribes as a "medicine" for ceremonial purification, as well as an agent for producing the nervous state and disordered imagination believed to be necessary to acquire "spiritual power". The name of the famed Seminole warrior and leader, Osceola (*Assi-yabóla*, "black-drink singer"), was derived from this custom.

Hickory—One of our most familiar American trees was made known by Captain John Smith in his History of Virginia, published in 1629, in which he described *pawcobiccora*, a food of the Algonquian Indians of Virginia, as a preparation of pounded walnut kernels with water. Transferred by the whites from the name of the food to the tree, and decapitated, *hickory* has been derived.

Kentucky—Merely because Oconostota, a Cherokee chief, chanced to mention the Kentucky region, about 1775, as the "dark and bloody ground," it has been and still is generally assumed that the name *Kentucky* bears this meaning. Nothing, however, could be farther from the truth. The late J. N. B. Hewitt, noted philologist of the Bureau of American Ethnology, after long research, learned that the name of the state was derived from the Choctaw *kantak*, or a close cognate thereof (with the suffix of the absolute case *-i*), signifying 'china briar,' 'china root' (*Smilax pseudo-china*), from the roots of which the Indians made bread, a jelly, and hot cakes or fritters.

Succotash—This Indian word in its present-day use by white people has a very different meaning from that applied by the Narraganset and other Algonquian Indians and recorded by Roger Williams as early as 1643 in the form *msickquatash*, referring to a boiled ear of corn, although the word really signifies simply an ear of corn, whether boiled or raw. In 1778 Carver in his Travels described "succatash" as a dish composed of corn, beans, and bear's flesh, thus extending the meaning ascribed to the term by the Indians. What name the Indians applied to this mixture is not known. Roger Williams defines *nasauamp* as a "kind of meale pottage unparched, from which the English call their *samp*, which is Indian corn beaten and boiled, or eaten hot or cold with milke or butter."

Whisky-john—Those familiar with the Canada jay have doubtless heard the name "whisky-john" applied to that bird, sometimes also "whisky-jack" and even "whisky-dick." The name, however, has no reference to the inebriate habits of that bird, but is merely a corruption, by folk-etymology, of *wiskachán*, the name of the bird in the Cree Indian language.

PEN PAL

We have heard from several readers that this Pen Pal column is really working out fine and we certainly are glad to hear it. Why not add your name to the list?

Clyde C. Wheeler
P. O. Box 833
Lynchburg, Va.

Clyde writes: I would like to correspond with anyone working with a dance group and also with one working with groups using Ceremonies and Rituals.

Ernest Ayles
172 Lynn St.
Peabody, Mass.

He wants two Pen Pals: (1) I have been a dance leader of an Order of the Arrow group for about two years and want to correspond with someone who has had good luck with a dance team. (2) I would also like to correspond with an Indian boy about 24 or 25 as I am 25. I am part Indian but do not know very much about it.

Kurt Wolintarski
Baumgartensteg 4/1
Berlin-Spandau (British Sector)
Germany

I have always been interested in frontier history. My main interest is in the Indian (history, life, chiefs, etc.) Woodland, Plains, Southwest etc. I am a clerk in an accountants office. I am 47 years old. I would enjoy having correspondence with anyone interested.

ODDS & ENDS - All American Indian Days; Sheridan, Wyoming will be held August 2,3,& 4 this year.

The Koshare Summer show will be July 19,20,21 at La Junta, Colorado.

Pawnee Indian Homecoming will be July 11-14 at Pawnee, Oklahoma.

Plan a trip somewhere this summer. It sure pays to travel and learn.

CREDITS

Credits this month go to Colin Taylor our prize winner for the article on the Plains Indians Shirt. The photos illustrating this article are from the British Museum.

To Mrs. Taranoff of Tacoma, Wash. for the article on High Boots.

To Doris Platt for the article on the Hu-Ton-Win dance group. An article by Bob Platt on the male section of this group will follow next month.

To the Southwest Museum for the fine article on Blackfoot Winter Sports by John C. Ewers reprinted from the Masterkey.

And to the Museum of the American Indian for the Photo of the Month.

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Norman Feder - Editor & Publisher